



COUNTERPOINT

A Periodic Newsletter On Soviet Active Measures

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THE MARKETING of MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

As each new leader ascends to the post of General Secretary of the CPSU, the Soviet agitprop workers create an image for him and 'sell' it to the West. Because of the secrecy that surrounds the private and public lives of the Soviet leadership, the West eagerly consumes what little knowledge is made available. Ever hopeful that one day communism will assume a human face, the West time and again 'buys' the image and ignores the reality.

There was kindly Papa Lenin, forceful Uncle Joe, the folksy Khrushchev, the peace-loving Brezhnev and the westernized Andropov. Now we are given Mikhail Gorbachev — a man who is more like us, an intellectual reformer and a pragmatist with whom the West can deal effectively.

Mr Gorbachev, his press clippings note, is a lawyer and the best educated Soviet leader since Lenin. As Stalin liquidated anyone of his generation who was brighter than he was, this is not too surprising. Mr Gorbachev, although trained as a lawyer, never practised law but devoted himself to party work instead. As a Soviet lawyer's job is to see that the formalities of Soviet law are maintained, being a lawyer does not necessarily mean that Gorbachev is either a well-educated intellectual or a champion of justice.

Mr Gorbachev's reputation as a 'reformer' was earned by his efforts to improve Soviet agricultural performance. He served as the CPSU's Secretary for Agriculture, a no-win/no-lose position: no-win

because Soviet agriculture is hopelessly mismanaged by the Party and no-lose because it is impossible to do a worse job than your predecessor. In the Soviet Union reform takes place within the system and does not entail any change of the system itself. Gorbachev's 'reforms' were little more than tinkering with an already discredited system of management. There is no reason to believe that he contemplates any significant change in his country's economic or governmental structures.

There is also no reason to see Gorbachev as a reformer of foreign policy. Although as a specialist on agriculture he has not focused to any great extent on international relations, Gorbachev has supported the Party line on foreign affairs and has not given any indication that he disagrees with it in any way. He has praised the Vietnamese invasion of Laos and Kampuchea, attacked the West for its 'psychological warfare' against the Eastern Bloc, and defended the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. His few statements on foreign policy hardly support the image of Gorbachev as a young liberal intent on a less belligerent approach to the West.

Mr Gorbachev has been labelled a pragmatist, it seems, because he does not use Marxist-Leninist slogans in his conversations with Western leaders and reporters. No doubt, he will also refrain from using his shoe à la Khrushchev to make a political statement. But perhaps a far more

realistic indicator of Gorbachev's pragmatism is his rapid rise to the pinnacle of the Soviet power structure.

It is only possible to achieve what Gorbachev has by conforming to the Kremlin's unwritten rules, by being a team player and by having some very powerful friends. And Gorbachev's friends were two of the most powerful men in the Soviet hierarchy — Mikhail Suslov and Yuri Andropov. It is not known how Gorbachev became a protégé of Suslov and Andropov but all three shared links to the Stavropol region between the Caspian and Black Seas in the USSR. Whatever brought them together it certainly was not devotion to liberal ideas or freethinking. Suslov, as the Party authority on orthodoxy, would not have furthered the career of anyone who challenged the Party's supremacy or questioned the 'true faith' of communism. Similarly, it is impossible to imagine Andropov as Chairman of the KGB supporting anyone who was either 'Westernized' or a closet liberal. If Gorbachev is a reform-minded liberal, he has hidden it well.

What does not need to be hidden, and what his press agents have exploited, is Gorbachev's personal style. Unlike his immediate predecessors, he appears healthy, relaxed and aware of how to use the media. He has a reputation as the best public speaker in the leadership and quite obviously works at projecting an image abroad of self-confidence and sophistication. Gorbachev and his wife look like us. And the Kremlin's marketing experts, and the disinformation specialists, have immediately pushed the resemblance as far and as fast as possible.

Before the West swallows the image, hook line and sinker, however, it is worth recalling a comment made in the *Times* after Gorbachev's visit to Great Britain in December: "A guest appearance by a rising star of the Soviet apparatus will not alter the underlying nature of the system which produced him . . . his foreign policy will be inspired by the same hostile ideol-

ogy and determination to expand Soviet influence which prevails at present and which has had his loyal support since he began his career over thirty years ago."

WHO TRAINS SOVIET DIPLOMATS?

There is a tendency in the West to underestimate the Active Measures efforts of diplomatic personnel (real diplomats, not dressed up KGB officers). The West usually works on the assumption that diplomats are quite obviously pushing their government's interests and that all diplomats tend to work in essentially the same ways. If this assumption is valid, then why does Sergey Leonidovich Tikhvinskiy, a major-general in the KGB, serve as head of the Soviet Diplomatic Academy?

Tikhvinskiy, born in 1918, has been a Communist Party member since 1941. He graduated from the Chinese Department of the Philological Faculty of Leningrad University and after intensive espionage training was posted to China.

From 1943 to 1950, Tikhvinskiy was first an assistant and later the Chief of the Soviet spy network in Urumchi and in Peking, all the while under diplomatic cover. As assistant chief of the Soviet Intelligence in Moscow from 1950 to 1953, he served under the diplomat/KGB officer Aleksandr Panuskhin. Panuskhin had earned his reputation by serving as Soviet Ambassador and chief of the spy apparatus in both Washington and Peking.

Once again a 'diplomat', Tikhvinskiy spent 1953 to 1957 as chief of the Soviet spy networks in Great Britain and in Japan. He was responsible for placing Ilya Ehrenburg, the veteran Soviet literary figure and propagandist, under surveillance while he was in Vienna for a Communist peace rally. This time Tikhvinskiy, for a change, was travelling as a 'correspondent' for *Pravda*.

Tikhvinskiy uses a different cover now for his spy work — he appears in Soviet publications as a Doctor of Historical Sciences (1964). He got his doctorate after

he wrote the book *Kang Yu-wei and the Reform Movement in China in the Late XIX Century*. All the research on this book was done by his subordinate officers in the KGB.

Tikhvinskiy has been rector of the Soviet Diplomatic Academy since early 1982. One can conjecture as to the kind of training Tikhvinskiy's Academy is giving to young Soviet diplomats. Perhaps it is only coincidence that 49 Soviets were officially declared *persona non grata* in 1982, while in 1983 the figure jumped to 135. These figures do not include those Soviets who were quietly asked to leave a host country or who were simply not given visas or visa renewals because of illegal intelligence activity.

Last year, on its 50th anniversary, the Soviet Diplomatic Academy was awarded the Order of the Red Banner 'for services in training highly skilled diplomatic cadres'. Training them to do what?

COMMUNIST MEDIA AND THE ETHIOPIAN TRAGEDY

According to Soviet and pro-Soviet media, the Ethiopian government has taken prompt action to limit the effects of the recent drought and, with aid from the Soviet bloc, now has the situation under control. This assessment, however, was news to the United Nations officer in charge of aid to Ethiopia, who recently issued a report warning that 7.5 million people are without food or medical care, and that a third of them may die from starvation.

Although drought, primitive agricultural techniques and armed rebellion contributed, it is the Ethiopian regime itself that is largely to blame for the famine. Addis Ababa's rulers were warned in a 1982 UN study that unless they reversed their wasteful agricultural policies, a major disaster would soon strike. The Ethiopian government not only ignored the study but continued to destroy the country's peasant farming society in favour of an unpro-

ductive and expensive system of Soviet-style state farms. The government has also continued to channel its funds into arms for sub-Saharan Africa's largest standing army and has misused its foreign aid by investing it in consumer goods rather than agriculture.

The Soviet press has attempted to play down not only the extent of the famine that threatens more than a fifth of Ethiopia's population, but the pro-Soviet Ethiopian government's culpability in that famine. The Soviet foreign political magazine *New Times*, for example, reported last December that "hardly had the size of the catastrophe been recognized before the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Ethiopian Workers' Party had taken into its hands the direction of the fight." The famine itself is scarcely mentioned. By emphasizing the drought, which after all is an act of Nature, the Soviet and Ethiopian press hope to deflect criticism of the fact that the Ethiopian Workers' Party adopted the Soviet agricultural model with disastrous results.

Neither the Soviet nor the Ethiopian media mention this. They both, however, are quick to give credit to the fraternal socialist countries for helping to save millions of Ethiopians.

The Soviets, in a departure from their usual practice of providing only military aid, have delivered 10,000 tons of rice - a total that the *Washington Post* notes is less than one third of the European Community's pledge, one fourth that of the UN World Food Programme, one tenth of the pledge of Canada and one twentieth of the pledge of the United States. Most of their help has been logistical: 12 aircraft, 24 helicopters and 300 trucks to distribute aid provided by other nations. Bulgaria has donated 18,000 tons of food and other Soviet allies have sent tents, clothing and medical supplies. The Soviet Union has also generously provided Addis Ababa with an exhibition of more than 400 pictures and posters on the life of Soviet youth.

"Other countries too have reacted to

calls for help," *New Times* noted, but did not elaborate on which countries responded or how much aid they sent. This 'help' from other countries has amounted to over 400,000 tons of food and US \$250 million worth of medical, transport and other emergency aid, or roughly 13 times as much food as the communist nations have provided. More Western aid is on the way, whereas the late Soviet president, Konstantin Chernenko, sent Ethiopian leader Colonel Mengistu Haile-Mariam home empty-handed after his December visit to Moscow. Chernenko promised only to send help "so far as is possible". The Soviet Bloc media nevertheless reported Mengistu's "deeply felt thanks" for this "unselfish" assistance.

Perhaps conscious of their own meagre efforts, the Soviets have begun to denigrate the humanitarian aid offered by others. In a *New Times* article, the Soviets imply that the Western aid effort is motivated not by generosity but by greed. "Many Western firms have leapt at the chance afforded by Ethiopia's plight to get rid of shop-soiled goods (which as 'charity' are not taxable)."

Moscow had apparently instructed the Ethiopians to play down the significance of Western aid. While praising such "unselfish" Soviet assistance as a shipment of 200,000 sets of plastic picnic utensils which Moscow sent to Ethiopia in January, or the promised arrival of a team of Soviet aerobics instructors who are "to improve the conditions for the population," the Ethiopian media practically ignore Western aid.

For example, a US pledge of 50,000 tons of food was only reported by *The Ethiopian Herald* nineteen days after it was made and even then was buried in a piece on worldwide aid to the stricken country. A United States pledge of an additional \$400 million in emergency food and medical aid for Ethiopia's starving millions went unreported.

As Colonel Mengistu noted, Ethiopia does not keep count of aid offered, either

in dollars or any other currency — especially since the totals would no doubt prove embarrassing to his chief ally, the Soviet Union.

SOVIETS TRY TO IMPLICATE US IN SPY SCANDAL

The Indian government recently disclosed that a major spy ring which had infiltrated the top levels of the New Delhi bureaucracy was selling Indian state secrets to several bidders including France, East Germany, Poland and the Soviet Union. While the French maintained a discreet silence the Eastern Bloc countries not only denied their guilt, but tried to implicate the United States and unnamed NATO countries in the scandal.

Through news stories planted in pro-Moscow Indian newspapers like *The Patriot*, the Soviet Bloc intelligence services have long tried to portray the Western nations, and particularly the United States, as enemies of India intent on stealing its most important military, political and economic secrets. So quite naturally on January 21, *The Patriot* falsely reported that six West German, American and French diplomats had been expelled from India for espionage. Indian Home Minister, S. B. Chavan, quickly told the press that the report was false but, as in any good Active Measures operation, the "news" was not allowed to die but was replayed as often as the Soviets could find a ready listener. In this way, the story that began with the *Patriot* article was picked up by the Soviets, replayed by TASS, and eventually reappeared in *The Hindustan Times* of January 25.

Sometimes these anti-Western stories are initiated by the Soviet media, and then picked up by the Indian media as part of its overseas coverage. Last June, for example, several New Delhi papers reported that Western "subversive activities



in India had been stepped up". The report had been published originally by *Pravda*, then had been carried by the Soviet TASS wire service, and eventually was picked up and distributed by the Indian UNI News Service.

Not too surprisingly, Eastern Bloc officials, who have been quick to comment in support of the "news" stories about Western subversion in India, are reluctant to discuss their own problems. Polish Ambassador Ryszard Fijalkowski called the Indian government's charge that his embassy was involved in the spy ring "baseless". The Soviet Ambassador refused to comment on the expulsion of two of his diplomats. The East Germans have also remained quiet on the expulsion of one of their representatives in India. The Soviet Bloc media, needless to say, have not reported their governments' involvement in the Indian spy case at all.

The Indians have learned that if unchallenged these stories take on a life of their own and soon assume the aura of truth. They have also learned, most recently from the false allegations surrounding the Gandhi assassination, that if refuted quickly the effect of the lie campaign can be diminished. The Indian government's prompt denial of any US involvement in the spy scandal was highly successful in undermining Moscow's disinformation campaign.

THE POPIELUSZKO SHOW TRIAL

The Torun trial of the murderers of Jerzy Popieluszko is over. The four murderers have been found guilty and sentenced to prison. Although the trial itself was an unprecedented event under

communism, still the reporting of it was no more nor less than a communist show trial. And though questions remain about who ultimately was responsible for the order to murder the Polish priest, one can be sure that the answers will never be aired by the state-controlled Polish or Soviet media.

Nothing much emerged from the trial, or from the Polish media reporting, that the authorities were not willing to have revealed, except perhaps for the embarrassing hints of the vast authority wielded by the powerful and mysterious Polish Ministry of Internal Affairs, particularly its involvement in policing the Church. But the prosecutor stopped short of attempting to uncover those at the top who had authorized the kidnapping and slaying. There was absolutely no mention of meetings held at the Ministry of Internal Affairs to discuss what to do about Popieluszko. There was also no mention of a fierce attack on the priest by *Izvestiya* last September 12, about a month before his death, that charged him with working with activists of the banned Solidarity trade union. Media coverage ignored the aspect of official involvement and hinted instead that some well-intended though overly-zealous individuals had been provoked into taking matters into their own hands.

Day after day, the Polish media aired unproven charges of illegal and improper conduct by Popieluszko and other clergymen, while omitting rebuttal statements made by Church spokesmen. It soon became obvious that the government hoped to turn the trial of secret police murderers into a trial of Catholic Church involvement in Polish politics. Government radio and television reported, for example, testimony by Captain Piotrowski, the acknowledged leader of the murder team, that slandered his victim in particular and the Catholic Church in general. Uninterrupted by the judge, Piotrowski accused one Polish bishop of collaborating with the Nazis, another of hiding money for Soli-

darity, and the victim himself of storing ammunition in his apartment and of having 'close contacts' with a young woman.

A Polish Church spokesman, Archbishop Dabrowski, Secretary of the Polish Episcopate, charged in a letter to the Polish government that the official Polish media had "tendentiously" reported on the trial by playing up courtroom attacks against the Church while censoring out key sections of rebuttal statements made at the trial by Church attorneys. On behalf of the Catholic Church, Archbishop Dabrowski submitted "an official protest against such methods of manipulating information and public opinion".

Because of the immense interest in the case, it was impossible for the Polish regime to blank out domestic coverage of the trial. Moscow, however, never has to contend with public demand and so the Soviet media referred only briefly to the priest's death when it occurred and ignored the trial completely until the court's verdict was handed down. At that point TASS referred to the killers only as "four citizens", ignoring their status as Polish security policemen. Yet TASS was quick to point out that the accused had been driven into action in order to "prevent activity harmful to the state".

The TASS report, reprinted in *Izvestiya* on February 8, noted that "the trial has confirmed that there have been numerous instances of activities hostile to the socialist state by representatives of the Polish Catholic Church, of abuse by them of the freedom of religious worship. They are using church services for political purposes, for various kinds of demonstrations of an overtly anti-socialist and, not infrequently, anti-Soviet nature."

The TASS report made the Soviet view of the event perfectly clear: there was no secret police involvement, the murderers were patriotic hotheads and the real culprits were the victim himself and the Church that supported him.

CHERNENKO : THE PICTURE OF HEALTH

For some reason, whether insecurity or merely tradition, the Soviets seem unable to allow their leaders to pass away in peace. Chernenko, like Andropov and Brezhnev before him, played his part in this 'cult of health' by which the Party portrays a dying leader as neither incapacitated nor ailing but still strongly in control of the government. Although the West had long been holding a death watch for Chernenko, the Soviets carefully staged two different appearances by the dying Chairman.

After a two-month absence, Chernenko reappeared on February 24 in order to vote in the elections. He was shown on Soviet television only in stationary positions — sitting to receive his ballot-paper, standing to cast his vote and to receive flowers. Never was he shown in motion and he was able to stand only with the support of an aide. (When photographs of the voting were printed in the Moscow newspapers, however, the aide had been airbrushed out of the photo, creating the illusion that Chernenko was able to stand alone.) Those officials present at the voting were quite obviously concerned about the Secretary General's ability to conduct even so limited a performance. The room where the voting took place did not resemble other Soviet polling places but looked like a redecorated hospital room. Soviet reports on the voting failed to mention the specific polling place where Chernenko voted, as they did in previous years, but only gave the name of the electoral district.

As if aware of the inadequacy of this appearance, the General Secretary was shown again on Soviet television on February 28 receiving his credentials to the RSFSR Supreme Soviet. Once again, Chernenko was shown only sitting or standing (this time holding on to the back of a chair), never in motion. The ceremony took place in a room that was

remarkably similar to the one in which he had voted four days before. The two rooms appeared to be the same size, both were painted the same shade of pink and both had the same kind of curtains. This time Chernenko read a short statement, despite obvious difficulty in breathing.

These last two appearances were the culmination of a year-long effort to cover up the severe illness of the Kremlin's chief. During the visit of Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou, a meeting with Chernenko was ruled out because the General Secretary was on "winter holiday" or maybe "out of Moscow". Chernenko had previously missed Defence Minister Ustinov's funeral and in mid-January a scheduled Warsaw Pact meeting was cancelled.

While Chernenko was missing, however, statements were issued in his name and interviews with him were published. In addition, the report of a Politburo meeting of February 7 tried to create the impression that Chernenko had spoken at the session. All these efforts, apparently, were meant to support the contention that, though out of the public eye, the General Secretary was still hard at work.

BOOK NOTES

Lexicon of Soviet Political Terms by Ilya Zemtsov, PhD (Fairfax, Va; HERO Books, 1984)

"The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the worldview and mental habits . . . but to make all other modes of thought impossible." (George Orwell, 1984) This quote, with which Dr Zemtsov opens his study, encapsulates the author's approach to Soviet semantics — that Sovspeak is designed to control the perceptions of those who use it and thus is an attempt to manipulate the thoughts and actions of both the speaker and his audience. This

thesis underlies every line of Zemtsov's study of Soviet semantics. Unfortunately, it is not allowed to remain in the background but is constantly forced on the reader via heavy-handed editorial comments that weaken the study.

The author should have had more faith in his material. In those cases where he adopts a more restrained tone and allows the reader to draw his own conclusions, the book is much more effective. Sovspeak is nothing if not cooperative. Its manipulation of language, its merging of fact and fantasy into a new argot, is not only nefarious but highly entertaining. What could be more absurd than the Soviet use of the phrases socialist competition, filial gratitude, cult of personality, or democratic centralism? What could be more effective than the confusion generated by the Soviet Union's corruption of terms such as peace, freedom, revolution or even communism? Unfortunately, Dr Zemtsov does not seem to realize that the simple facts of Sovspeak are much more convincing than any argument he may propose.

It is a pity that the heavily slanted content detracts from what could have been a most interesting study of Soviet attempts to control perception through semantics. As a result, Dr Zemtsov provides no more than a cautionary example of how not to approach a study of this kind.

★

Dis-Information: A Four-Part Series by Elizabeth Pond in *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, USA), February 26, 27, 28 and March 1, 1985

This series is an excellent introduction to the subject of disinformation and Active

Measures. It includes a useful, if abbreviated, discussion of the general history and methods of disinformation with a closer look at some of the more frequently used tactics. In addition there are case studies that focus on particular subjects, such as Vietnam, the 'Spiegel' Affair, and the Czech Operation Neptune.

The author does a good job reporting the disparate views held on the subject by journalists, media analysts, government officials and former intelligence officers. Her frequent use of examples to illustrate the bare facts and her lively reporting style make the series enjoyable as well as informative reading. One could wish that there was more discussion of agents of influence and less eagerness to denigrate the efficacy of influence operations in international affairs, but these are minor dissatisfactions. Throughout, she carefully maintains a cool restraint that is so necessary to a reasoned discussion of disinformation and which so admirably supports her thesis that truth is its own best argument.

Before his death, Chernenko paid a quick visit to heaven and hell to find out which was the better place to spend eternity. Heaven was full of angels singing and looked rather boring. Hell, on the other hand, seemed to be full of wild parties with everyone having a great time. "This," decides Chernenko, "is the place for me."

After he dies, Chernenko is taken to hell. It is unbearably hot and the air is full of shrieking and wailing. Chernenko is aghast and seeks out the Devil to find out what is going on.

"This is nothing like the place I saw before," complains Chernenko. "No, it isn't," the Devil agrees, "but then you were on a visitor's visa."

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